

Bellaire Community United Methodist Church

June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2016

**“Everyone’s a Pastor”**

I Timothy 4:1-16

We have a lot to be thankful for, don’t we? Graduates, I’m sure you’d agree. Starting with: exams are finally done, right? Well, we are thankful that you are here today. We are thankful for your families and the community who helped you accomplish all that you have done. We are especially thankful for the life that God has given all of us, with all the amazing blessings that we sometimes overlook.

You are in the right place this morning. You are not here by accident. God is desperately seeking you and calling you this morning. He loves you. And if you are willing to listen, he will reveal something new to you this morning.

Would you please pray with me?

Holy God, we call on your name this morning, asking you to fill us with the Spirit of Christ. We pray that no one would leave this morning without knowing that you love them unconditionally, no matter who they are or what they’ve done. Teach us what you would have us know, about ourselves and about you, and then help us to respond to your call. We pray this in Jesus’ name. Amen.

How many of you have ever taken a speech class? This may come as a shock to you, but I used to be terrified of public speaking. I know, I picked an odd profession if that is true. But I actually started out studying engineering, not ministry.

In fact, as a college freshman, I was required to take public speaking. Half-way through the semester, in the middle of one of my speeches in class, I froze up completely. I was a stuttering wreck. To the shock of the whole class and the

professor, I sat back down in my seat and refused to finish the speech.

Fortunately the professor gave me another chance the following week. I eventually got a “B” in the class, and I was very grateful.

I froze up when I realized that all the people in the room were looking at me. I was easily intimidated. I didn’t mean to be, but I often felt like people were looking down at me. Maybe you have felt that way before, too. If so, you know how hard it can be to try to be yourself, to get the words out just right.

This is one of the reasons I love to read 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy. It is full of encouragement to overcome intimidation. As I read this, I always felt like the Apostle Paul was talking directly to me.

If you don’t know the background on this book of the bible, I can tell you that the Apostle Paul was writing to a young man who had a big job. Timothy was in Ephesus to help the churches grow, and he was up against some pretty bad intimidation. Paul had to encourage Timothy to preach the truth: that everything God created was good, and that our only hope was in the living God.

Paul had some very practical advice for Timothy, but I believe this advice is good for all of us, not just pastors and church leaders. For starters, Paul says, only have one wife. (1 Tim 3:2) I don’t care who you are, that’s good advice! He said to avoid quarrels, and watch your life closely. He said not to let anyone look down on you.

I don’t know about you, but there are times in my life when I need that kind of encouragement. It doesn’t matter if you are young, old, or in between – this world is full of people who will try to look down on you. And that’s why I believe this letter is written for the whole church, not just pastors. Because we all have someone who is watching us, to see what type of example we will set.

Look at verse 12 closely. “Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.”

This verse reminds me of King David. I talked about him a few weeks ago. When David was serving God, a lot of people looked down on him. His family, his brothers, his king, and the giant, Goliath, all slandered and mocked David. But David set the example. Go back sometime and read I Samuel 17, the story of David and Goliath. See how David spoke, how he lived, how he trusted God. He set a powerful example that we still admire today.

We are all supposed to set the example for others. The truth is, we are all pastors, in the original sense of the word. You know, like “pastoral”, as in, shepherding. God has placed someone in your life to whom you are a caretaker. Maybe it’s a brother or sister. A neighbor. A friend. We are all ministers. How we live our lives and what we choose to say is going to teach someone about faith in God, for good or for bad.

The word “minister” is used in verse 6, but do you know what that word actually means? A servant. It’s not the guy behind the pulpit. Timothy wasn’t appointed to a church as a pastor. He was there to serve the church, because they were all supposed to be serving each other. They were all ministers.

Paul also told Timothy not to neglect his gift. This is where I really want to address the students here. Each of us has a gift that is given to us by God through the community we live in. What’s your gift? Is it encouragement? Giving? Listening? Working with your hands? Babysitting? There is so much God has given us to do, we should not neglect any gift by saying it’s too small.

Each one of us is a pastor. Believe me. Each one of us is called to serve one another in Jesus' name. Each of us has a unique gift. We need to realize that.

God calls each and every one of us to live for him. And the way to start to live into that calling is to know the gospel of Jesus Christ. I want to explain that gospel to you now with 5 G's.

The first G stands for Good. God created everything, and as it says in Genesis, it was good. That includes you and me. God made this world to be perfect, but something messed it up.

The second G stands for Guilt. The thing that messed up God's perfect creation was sin. Adam and Eve chose to disobey God, and all of their children since have followed their footsteps. That includes you and me. We are all guilty of sin. We all make selfish, hurtful decisions that cause God pain and corrupt the relationships that God intended for us. Nothing we can do on our own can correct that. No one is "good enough" to go to heaven. Not when God's standard is perfect holiness.

This is where the third G comes in. It stands for Grace. God, seeing our predicament, knowing that he had to reconcile his holiness and his love for us, sent his own son into the world. Jesus Christ was born 2000 years ago, grew up and lived, fully human, just like you and me. But Jesus was also fully God. So he could do what no one else had ever done before. He could live a sinless life and willingly die on a cross to save us. The Bible promises that everyone who believes in Jesus Christ alone will be saved. (Romans 10:9) Grace is the forgiveness and mercy we receive through Jesus, the love that God freely offers, even though we don't deserve it. It is a gift freely offered to all.

Many gospel presentations stop here. But there are two more G's. The fourth G stands for Gratitude. When you realize just how much Jesus loves you, you respond. You worship him. You serve him. You tell others about him. The word "Christian" literally means "little Christ." Our response to God's love is to follow the example that Jesus gave us, and love others the way he loved. To live lives of integrity like Christ did. To be humble and kind, to love justice and mercy, to help the meek and poor. All that we do is out of gratitude, not because we are trying to impress God.

But we don't do all that alone. We are part of the community of faith. The fifth G stands for "God's people." We belong to the Church, which is filled with imperfect people who try to follow a perfect God. This place is filled with pastors, ministers, and servants. When you say "Yes" to Jesus, it's like he says, "Congratulations! You're adopted!" Because you are now connected to everyone, everywhere, who follows Christ. And that's an amazing thing.

You might not feel like you're a pastor. You might not feel that you can set the example. But I am telling you, you can. And you can start right now by realizing what Christ has done for you. In fact, that's why we celebrate the sacrament of communion. It's the story of how we were redeemed. On the night he was betrayed.....

### Memory verse

**Colossians 3:17** - "And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

### Reflection questions

1. Have you ever felt that someone has "looked down on you"? Why?
2. What do you think other people learn from your words and actions?

3. Have you ever thought of yourself as a minister? Why or why not?
4. What opportunities does God place in your everyday life for you to minister to others? Will you take them?